



**PROANTIC**  
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## Alfred Rethel After (1816-1859), Death As A Servant, C. 1920



180 EUR

Signature : Alfred Rethel

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Length : 36 cm

Height : 42 cm

### Description

Alfred  
Rethel after (1816 Diepenbenden - 1859  
Düsseldorf), Death as a servant, around  
1920. Color woodcut by Oskar Bangemann after  
a drawing by Rethel created around  
1845 on handmade paper with watermark  
"HAHNEMÜHLE", 30.5 cm x 27 cm  
(depiction), 42 cm x 36 cm (sheet size), signed  
"O.[skar] Bangemann  
SC.[ulpsit]" in the plate lower left and also  
inscribed "A.[lfred] Rethel" in  
the plate as a work by Rethel.  
- Slight  
traces of creasing in the lower margin, otherwise  
in excellent condition with a  
strong impression.

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Alfred

Rethel's drawing, cut into wood by Oskar

Bangemann, is in the Dresden

Kupferstichkabinett. Even before Rethel struck

the artistic nerve of his time

with his own series of woodcuts, "Auch ein

Totentanz" (1848), he had

already explored the theme of the dance of death,

studying in particular the

graphic Dance of Death by Hans Holbein the

Younger and its new edition by

Nikolaus Daniel Chodowiecki. The master of the

house, torn from life by death,

is obviously an aristocratic ruler with a wig and

ermine-trimmed coat, while

the collapsed man is supported by a bourgeois

with a fallen top hat. Death thus

also illustrates a socio-political turning point in

the context of an Italian

Renaissance scene.

Oskar

Bangemann, who was head of the woodcut class

at the Berlin Museum of Decorative

Arts from 1924 to 1942 and taught at the Berlin

Academy of Fine Arts, was a

master of the woodcut technique. He transformed

Rethel's pale pencil drawing

into an expressive shade of red. The result is an

"all-over" of lines

reminiscent of Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts, from

which the dramatic scene of

sudden death emerges again and again.

About the

artist

The

talented Alfred Rethel began his studies at the

Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1829

at the age of thirteen. His teachers, Heinrich

Christoph Kolbe and Wilhelm

Schadow, followed a classical Nazarene style,

while Carl Friedrich Lessing, who also worked in Düsseldorf, introduced Rethel to history painting, which had a formative influence on him. In 1836 Rethel went to the Städelsche Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, which was directed by Philipp Veit. In Frankfurt he received the prestigious commission to fresco the Kaisersaal of the Römer with portraits of rulers, and he also won the competition to paint the Coronation Hall of the Aachen City Hall with scenes from the life of Charlemagne.

After creating the illustrations for the "Nibelungenlied" (1840/41) and the watercolor cycle "Der Zug Hannibals über die Alpen" (1842-1844), Rethel traveled to Rome in 1844. There he studied the art of Raphael and associated with the "German Romans". Upon his return, he moved to Dresden and in 1847 began work on the Charlemagne frescoes for the Aachen City Hall. In 1848 Rethel created the woodcut series "Auch ein Totentanz" (Also a Dance of Death), which made him one of the most famous artists of his time. Demand was so great that the series was reprinted in an edition of 10,000 copies, which was unusual for the time.

From 1852 to 1853, Rethel was again in Italy, where his mental state became increasingly cloudy. The resulting illness led to his early death at the age of 43.